

Climate Change and Migration in the South
Pacific Region symposium

Climate Change in the South Pacific: Issues and Possible Responses

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The nature of migration

- Increasing movements of people
- Migration drivers –
economic/political/social/security/environmental
- Temporary or permanent or circular
- Forced ↔ voluntary



New Zealand immigration

- New Zealand is shaped by migration
- Migration → nation-building
- Pathway of temporary stay → permanent residence → citizenship



Immigration objectives

Immigration furthers a number of objectives for New Zealand:

- *Economic growth*
- *Family reunification*



Immigration objectives (cont)

- *Meeting our international obligations*
- *Strengthening international relations*
- *Protecting NZ's interests*



Immigration policies for the Pacific

- New Zealand has specific immigration avenues for people from the Pacific
 - Pacific Access Category (permanent migration)
 - Samoan Quota (permanent migration)
 - Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme (circular migration scheme)



Pacific immigration outcomes

- Pacific people comprise 6.9% of the population (266,000 people)
- 59% of the Pacific population in NZ was born here
- Pacific migrants make positive contributions



The situation in the Pacific



Development issues in the Pacific

- Some Pacific states are close to sustainability thresholds
- Climate change will exacerbate existing challenges for development rather than create a distinct set of new issues



The pictures...



...and the headlines

"Drowning worlds - the last tide could come at any time"

"Climate refugees flee from rising sea in Pacific"

"Climate change will create world's worst migration crisis"



Uncertainty and its effects

- Besides the physical effects - what will be the social and economic effects of climate change?
- How does migration fit into this equation?



Could forced migration happen in the Pacific?

- Many unknowns about the potential for forced migration in the Pacific
- Sudden mass migration is most likely to be the exception, not the norm



New Zealand's response

- Correction: there is no agreement with Tuvalu to relocate its population
- New Zealand does and will help the Pacific Islands, through many channels



Adaptation: NZ's primary focus

- Climate change adaptation is interconnected to sustainable development
- Migration → remittances and skills transfers → development



Looking into the future

- Existing immigration avenues specific to Pacific migrants **potentially provide a platform for any future responses to climate change migration**



New Zealand's advantage

- New Zealand can build upon its experience and close ties with the Pacific in formulating responses to climate change in the Pacific



And then there's Australia, or the USA...



Cartoon by Nicholson from "The Australian" newspaper: www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au



